



Mother's Delight by iackrabbit

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Summary: Well, what the hell would you have done in my position? And I'm going to state my position clearly; Billy Hargrove was sitting in my kitchen, eating cookies no less, with my scantily clad Mother making god damned goo goo eyes at him. Turns out he's a real Mother's delight. (Billy/OC)

Mother's Delight

The Advil wasn't doing squat, not when it came to the thrumming headache that made me walk around squinting pitifully all day. It felt like I'd been hit by one of those long haul trucks that passed by Hawkins down the highway, swallowed up by all those wheels as they beat the hell outta me. Everything hurt with a dull, tedious persistency of throbbing pain. And the Advil didn't so much as touch upon it.

When Mom stopped me in the kitchen, looking plenty suspicious at my squinny eyed look and agonizing pace, I had no one to blame but myself. She'd just found me raiding the medicine cabinet for Christsakes. Of course she thought I was high, it was only last weekend she'd caught me smoking cigarettes in the yard. To a Mom cigarettes might as well have been heroin.

I must have looked a real sight, as pathetic as I felt while clutching a packet of advil to my chest like I was holding on for dear life. Because her apprehensive look gave way to something much kinder, a softness creeping into her pretty features when she saw the sheer misery etched on my face. "Oh, Heath, honey," she cooed.

I groaned, it came out a faintly mustered whimper. The kitchen lights were bright, artificial bursts of pure pain dotted behind my eyelids. I felt like I was gonna chuck up just standing there- or, rather, swaying there. My head emptied, I felt all floaty and faint all of a sudden, only for the pain to come back tenfold with a thundering roll of sharpness that wasn't there before.

"Mom, I don't feel so good," I said. Understatement of the year.

She pressed the back of her ring weathered hand against my forehead, doting, the way Mom's do. I screwed my eyes shut, willing for the pain to stop or pass or head some leeway.

"You should go to bed," she frowned, voice firm.

I nodded. "Yeah, okay. Bed it is."

I passed my Dad on the stairs, if he noticed his kid looked like hell he didn't dare comment on it. Sometimes I thought I could turn up dead and all he'd have to say is 'Oh, hi, Heather. Didn't see you there.'

As I dragged my ass up those stairs, pushing down the nausea that seemed to positively swim through my abdomen, I noticed my door was open. It was a hell of a thing, feeling half dead and trying to muster up the anger and betrayal only befitting of the moment. In all honesty, I was too tired to think, nevermind much else. I simply lugged down the hall, dragging my feet, hoping to hell Mom hadn't found reason to raid my belongings. Maybe that's why she looked ready to arrest me downstairs.

Instead, I found Mike.

The first rule of the house was to always hide the money, without exception. So, it was with no surprise or indignation that I found my kid brother rifling through my bedside cabinet. The bed hid him from sight, with only his bobbing mop of black hair and a glimpse of pale skin peeking above it. It had occurred to me that there were things in that cabinet he shouldn't see, like a switchblade I had pilfered from Robbie Langlow in the seventh grade, or a quart of whiskey still bottled up for long, sleepless nights. Still, I settled myself in a half lean against the door frame, catching sight of my reflection in the tall mirror wedged between the window sill and bookcase. Moody, bored eyes seeped into my reflection before darting back to the little thief rummaging through my things. I was looking a little peeky, but nothing serious enough to make Mike think he could pull one over.

"I haven't kept cash in my room since I was nine, dick," I said, after a moments deliberation.

Mike raised his head so fast I thought he'd contract whiplash. It made me kinda dizzy just watching him turn like that in the first place. He had the good grace to look a little ashamed, but in that kind of wheedling way in which one got caught with their hand in the cookie jar. It was a placating, sheer kind of shame. He'd learnt that from Mom, no doubt.

It was Mom who'd made me wise up to keeping money around the house. I'd woken up one fateful night only to see Mom raiding my

piggy bank, staring aimlessly at the woman I had trusted scrape spare change out of the ceramic pig in the dark. I hadn't let on that I'd seen it, but the next day Mom had gone to the salon- despite Dad refusing to dole out the cash for it. That was the day I learnt a thing or two about hiding places, misplaced trust and capitalism.

Still, I arched a brow at him, looking thoroughly unimpressed. If the kid was smart he would have raided Mom's jewelry box, or filch the half a pack in my top drawer and sell the cigarettes for a dime a piece. That'd be a dollar, easy. Hell, that whiskey in the bottom shelf was worth something even, to a middle schooler at least.

Like clockwork, when he realised looking sorry had no effect at all on his unmoved sister, he settled his features into a grave seriousness. Kid didn't have the brains to see monetary worth outside of coins but he'd try his hand at blackmailing himself out of the situation. It was all par for the course to me, the middle child of the family dynamic, I could see the notion of extortion a mile off. Hadn't I been the perpetrator of plenty the shakedown on Nancy? Hell, I taught Mike that look in the first place.

"Does Mom know you smoke like a chimney?" He wondered, waving a packet of cigarettes around. That very same pack he could have made bank on if he weren't so naive.

I grinned, kicking the heel of my boot against the door frame a couple of times. His eyes were drawn to the thick, heavy leather that'd be sure to leave a bruise before flitting back to my face once more. The threat went unspoken, but it hung in the air between us both. *Careful, Mikey*, it said, *I enjoy you, but be careful*.

"That information ain't worth the packet it's printed on, she caught me in the yard last weekend."

He let the pack fall back into the drawer. "Shit."

The two of us stared at each other, him tactfully avoiding my eyes and me taking the time to consider him with a lofty kind of gaze. Christ, Mike sure had grown recently, hadn't he? Thirteen year old boys took to growth spurts like damned weeds, it seemed. It occurred to me that retaliation was in order, that getting caught had never

been enough of a deterrent for myself at that age. Narrowing my eyes, I mulled over the idea of twisting his arm the wrong way, or kicking his shins once for good measure. Ultimately, I decided not to, at least not this time. The kid looked sorry enough, I suppose, though I'd bet it was because he hadn't found any money more so than getting himself caught. Besides, I wasn't feeling so hot, and the longer I stared at my bed set the more I felt like I might cry.

"Go on," I said, eventually. "Beat it."

Mike scrambled to his feet fairly quick. He was lanky, like he would be for years to come most likely, lending nothing towards grace and looking very much like his body hadn't filled out in account of his sudden growth. Maybe I'd shove some more meat on his plate tomorrow at dinner, or else I'd kick him beneath the table for coming into my damn room- nevermind trying to thief off of me.

Before he could dart past me I moved, filling up the doorway.

He looked wary. That was good, at least. The day Mike stopped being scared of me, the same way he wasn't scared of Nancy anymore, was closing in. With each growth spurt and attitude adjustment I caught sight of it. It was a depressing prospect, one distinctly tinged with age, as if to say see ya to our childhood and start up a whole new chapter as equals.

"Nancy hides hers in the second drawer. Knock yourself out, Butch Cassidy." Then, I promptly thrust a pointed finger in his face, leaning in. "Come in my room again and I'll crucify you."

Mike nodded, lips set into a solemn line only for a cheap grin to lift at his face. I moved past him, liking the way I didn't have to yell after him to close the door. Sure, I'd caught him trying to steal, but he closed the door all on his own. Good ole Mike, he knew how to toe the line alright.

I threw myself at the bed, the mattress had a little give as it dipped generously. Christ, what I'd give for a little peace and quiet around the house. What, between little brothers and sisters and an older sister to deal with. An overbearing Mom, hardly there Dad and an unforgiving marriage that I was held in the balance of. It was tiring.

It was the exact reason I'd taken to hiding out at a friend's place for the better half of my life. And yet here I was. The Advil wasn't worth it at all.

"Little shit," I murmured, eyeing the haphazard state of my drawers.

Vaguely, I heard footsteps.

"Hey, Heather-" Nancy called, before the footsteps came to an abrupt halt, outside what I could only assume was her own bedroom. "What the hell are you doing?"

"Heather made me do it!" Mike shouted. "I'll pay you back!"

Thundering footsteps clapped against the wooden staircase, and I groaned. "Your ass is grass, Mikey. Just wait." Then, eyeing the whiskey in the drawer- "Tomorrow. I'll get him tomorrow."

I fell asleep to the sound of my Parents yelling at my shithead siblings and the taste of the whiskey on my tongue. Just another day in the Wheeler family household, alright.